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ABSTRACT

Counselors today have a variety of choices when working with clients. They are challenged to select the most timely and cost effective ways to work with clients. SkillScan Online is a self-directed process that enables clients to assess skills and competencies, explore career options, and plan skill development activities to keep pace with the changing work demands. SkillScan Online was designed for use in a variety of settings including colleges, adult career centers, and military transition centers. This online skills assessment offers clients a tool that does not require the physical presence of a counselor. It gives them the opportunity to identify and review potential career options prior to counseling. The effective use of this program in this fast-paced job market puts effective skill identification in the client's hands. (JDM)

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SkillScan Online: Have Skills, Will Travel

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Introduction

SkillScan Online: Have Skills, Will Travel is a web-based skills identification process that helps clients identify their core strengths, skill sets and areas needing development. The program can be accessed through the Internet at www.skillscan.net. Organizations can offer it through an internal website for their employees, students or alumni. SkillScan Online is a self-directed process that enables clients or employees to assess skills and competencies, explore career options that match their skill sets and plan skill development activities to keep pace with changing work demands. In the Managing Career Roadmap section of the program, SkillScan Online offers a diagnostic exercise to troubleshoot career issues and features websites, book recommendations and other tools to enable clients to take steps toward their goals.

Today's fast moving economy places tremendous stress on organizations and individuals to keep pace with change. This new workplace requires workers to possess multiple skill sets, take ownership of their work, continually acquire new skills, learn new technologies, employ best practices and think creatively about how to add value to their organization. The last ten years of economic expansion followed by contraction has forced many workers to change careers, jobs and companies and become contractors or self-employed. These realities require counselors to gain the tools and knowledge necessary to assist clients in capitalizing on their strengths and repackaging their skills and experiences for new employment opportunities.

SkillScan Online

SkillScan Online was designed for career counselors, career coaches and human resources professionals to use with clients in a wide variety of settings including colleges, adult career centers, military transition centers, corporate employee development programs and government-based employment centers. A typical client is an adult who is planning his/her first career, undergoing a career change, planning a lateral move or seeking advancement opportunities.

SkillScan Online is based on the original SkillScan Professional Pack© color-coded card-sort system that was first published in 1987. The system was designed to quickly get to the heart of client competencies and preferences. It contains 64 skills that group into 7 color-coded skill categories; Communication, Humanitarian, Leadership/Management, Mental Analytical, Mental Creative, Creative Expression and Physical. The skill categories combined with the individual skills enable the client to assess work functions that best match his/her profile. SkillScan categories connect to Holland-based interest and Jungian-based personality themes to facilitate clients in seeing the pattern between their skills, interests and personality. This functionality has proven to be a useful tool for clients and counselors in enhancing the meaning of seemingly

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disparate self-assessment information. SkillScan is considered an intuitive-based assessment tool. It draws directly upon the client's self-perception of his/her abilities and preference for using a particular skill without reference to other's perceptions or norms.

The world of career counseling has changed in significant ways for the counselor. The world of technology offers numerous ways to assist clients with their career development needs. Given the access to the Internet, email and the older technologies of telephones and fax machines, clients can complete assessments online, gather information on jobs and careers in minutes and conduct the counseling session by phone or email.

An online skills assessment tool such as SkillScan Online, permits counselors to offer clients a tool that doesn't require the physical presence of the counselor. Within 35 – 60 minutes, clients gain a rich and comprehensive picture of their skills, strengths and areas of challenge. Clients can review and distill much of the information on their own while utilizing the counselor's objectivity and expertise to connect the information with other assessment results and client preferences to create an integrated career profile. Although SkillScan Online is a self-directed tool, the role of the counselor is critical in adapting it and applying it to the specific needs of the client.

The online program gives the client opportunity to identify and review potential career options and skill development activities prior to counseling. When the client meets with the counselor they often bring an expanded awareness about themselves and the possibilities that interest them. This increased self-awareness and knowledge of options can expedite the focusing and exploration process.

As the client internalizes the information gained from the online program he/she acquires a mental map of skill development goals and develops and a rich language for articulating strengths. This results in an increased ability to communicate strengths in resumes, cover letters, interviews and performance discussions or appraisals.

In the Managing Your Career Roadmap section of SkillScan Online, the client is directed through a needs-assessment process to troubleshoot the primary career development issue. Here the client determines if he/she is off-track, stalled on the track, or on-track with his/her career goals. Once a selection is made the program directs the client to specific strategies for taking action. At the next stage the client is guided to useful websites, book recommendations and other aids to meet their needs. Counselors have the option to direct the client to this section or simply instruct the client to stop at the report generation phase of the program.

Clients that use web-based technology to gather assessment and career exploration information are more likely to receive current data with server-side content updates along with new sources of information in the form of websites, books and other useful resources.

Adult clients often have limited time and money to devote to career assessment and counseling. Online tools such as SkillScan Online, allow the client to work at his/her own pace from home, a library, college computer center, career center workstation or the office. He/she can spend as long as he or she likes on the program without the constraints of a 50-minute counseling session

or a time-limited group workshop. Because the client completes the assessment prior to the counseling, the counseling session can focus on practical ways the client can integrate and apply the information.

SkillScan Online is accessible by the internet at www.skillscan.net. Counselors can refer a client to the site or purchase a number of uses to distribute accordingly. SkillScan can also be purchased as a site license where the program resides on an organization's server and can be made available to all employees or students via a link on the organization's web page. Counselors who would like to review the program can obtain a free 14 day trial of SkillScan Online by contacting SkillScan at (SkillScan@hotmail.com). Counselors do not need specialized training to administer SkillScan Online. But as with any instrument, it takes time and experience using it with a variety of clients to maximize its effectiveness.

Conclusion

Counselors today have the good fortune of a wide variety of choices to make in working with their clients. In the assessment arena there is a vast array of hard-copy exercises, books, software and online assessment tools to choose from. Counselors are challenged to select the most time and cost effective ways to work with clients given client's financial and time constraints. They must keep current of the many information resources available in a constantly moving job market. SkillScan Online, was designed as a counseling tool to provide timely and critical skill assessment information that can be immediately applied to client goals.

SkillScan Online: Have Skills, Will Travel leverages the power of the Internet, using a highly interactive and proven skills identification process to get to the heart of client skills, competencies and preferences. Career mobility in this fast changing world, puts effective skills identification in the drivers seat for adapting with change.

Resources

SkillScan Online: http://www.skillscan.net/